



## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA-2023-0081]

### Entry-Level Driver Training Requirements; Training Departments of Millis Transfer LLC (Millis Training Institute (MTI)); Heartland Express (Heartland Training Institute (HTI)); and Contract Freightier's Inc. (CFI); Application for Exemption

**AGENCY:** Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), (DOT).

**ACTION:** Notice of application for exemption; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** FMCSA announces that it has received a joint application from the training departments of Millis Transfer LLC (Millis Training Institute (MTI)); Heartland Express (Heartland Training Institute (HTI)); and Contract Freightier's Inc. (CFI) requesting an exemption from the entry-level driver training regulations requiring that a behind-the-wheel (BTW) training instructor have at least two years' experience driving a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) or two years' experience as a BTW CMV instructor, as set forth in the definition of behind-the-wheel instructor. MTI conducts training for all three companies and describes its trainer evaluation process as "second to none."

FMCSA requests public comment on the applicants' request for exemption.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments identified by Federal Docket Management System Number (FDMS) FMCSA-2023-0081 by any of the following methods:

- **Federal eRulemaking Portal:** [www.regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov). See the **Public Participation and Request for Comments** section below for further information.

- **Mail:** Docket Operations, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, West Building, Ground Floor, Room W12-140, Washington, DC 20590-0001.
- **Hand Delivery or Courier:** West Building, Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. E.T., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.
- **Fax:** (202) 493-2251.

Each submission must include the Agency name and the docket number (FMCSA-2023-0081) for this notice. Note that DOT posts all comments received without change to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), including any personal information included in a comment. Please see the **Privacy Act** heading below.

**Docket:** For access to the docket to read background documents or comments, go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) at any time or visit Room W12-140 on the ground level of the West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC, 20590-0001 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., ET, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 366-9317 or (202) 366-9826 before visiting Dockets Operations.

**Privacy Act:** In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31315(b), DOT solicits comments from the public to better inform its exemption process. DOT posts these comments, without edit, including any personal information the commenter provides, to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), as described in the system of records notice DOT/ALL-14 FDMS, which can be reviewed at <https://www.transportation.gov/privacy>, the comments are searchable by the name of the submitter.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Ms. Pearlie Robinson, FMCSA Driver and Carrier Operations Division; Office of Carrier, Driver and Vehicle Safety Standards; 202-366-4225 or [pearlie.robinson@dot.gov](mailto:pearlie.robinson@dot.gov). If you have questions on

viewing or submitting material to the docket, contact Dockets Operations, telephone (202) 366-9826.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### **I. Public Participation and Request for Comments**

FMCSA encourages you to participate by submitting comments and related materials.

#### Submitting Comments

If you submit a comment, please include the docket number for this notice (FMCSA-2023-0081), indicate the specific section of this document to which the comment applies, and provide a reason for suggestions or recommendations. You may submit your comments and material online or by fax, mail, or hand delivery, but please use only one of these means. FMCSA recommends that you include your name and a mailing address, an e-mail address, or a phone number in the body of your document so the Agency can contact you if it has questions regarding your submission.

To submit your comment online, go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) and put the docket number “FMCSA-2023-0081” in the “Keyword” box, and click “Search.” Next, sort the results by “Posted (Newer-Older),” choose the first notice listed, click the “Comment” button, and type your comment into the text box on the following screen. Choose whether you are submitting your comment as an individual or on behalf of a third party and then submit. If you submit your comments by mail or hand delivery, submit them in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. If you submit comments by mail and would like to know that they reached the facility, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope. FMCSA will consider all comments and material received during the comment period.

### **II. Legal Basis**

FMCSA has authority under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b) to grant exemptions from certain Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. FMCSA must publish a notice of each exemption request in the Federal Register (49 CFR 381.315(a)). The Agency must provide the public an opportunity to inspect the information relevant to the application, including any safety analyses that have been conducted. The Agency must also provide an opportunity for public comment on the request.

The Agency reviews safety analyses and public comments submitted and determines whether granting the exemption would likely achieve a level of safety equivalent to, or greater than, the level that would be achieved by the current regulation (49 CFR 381.305). The decision of the Agency must be published in the Federal Register (49 CFR 381.315(b)) with the reasons for denying or granting the application and, if granted, the name of the person or class of persons receiving the exemption, and the regulatory provision from which the exemption is granted. The notice must also specify the effective period and explain the terms and conditions of the exemption. The exemption may be renewed (49 CFR 381.300(b)).

### **III. Applicant's Request**

The applicants seek an exemption from the BTW instructor qualification requirements as set forth in the definition of "Behind-the-wheel (BTW) instructor" in FMCSA's entry level driver training regulations (49 CFR 380.605). The applicants state that the two-year experience requirement for BTW instructors impedes their ability to hire enough trainers to meet the demand. The applicants further explain that MTI conducts training for all three acquired companies and believe MTI's pre-ELDT policy of a one-year minimum experience for its over-the-road (OTR) trainers and its "extensive" safety evaluation of those trainers has allowed it to be a positive contributor to highway safety.

MTI reports an estimated student enrollment of 500 to 700 students for 2023 for all three companies. Its 131 trainers currently spend up to 90 days with a student before letting them drive solo and because of the shortage of trainers, MTI will have to turn some students away. The proposed exemption would allow MTI to continue its one-year minimum training experience requirement so that it can add another 90 to 150 BTW trainers to its current trainer group. Should the exemption be granted, these additional trainers would be allowed to conduct BTW training without meeting the two-year minimum requirement for BTW instructors.

A copy of the application for exemption is included in the docket for this notice.

#### **IV. Request for Comments**

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31315(b), FMCSA requests public comment from all interested persons on this joint application for an exemption from the BTW instructor qualification requirements in 49 CFR 380.605. All comments received before the close of business on the comment closing date indicated at the beginning of this notice will be considered and will be available for examination in the docket at the location listed under the Addresses section of this notice. Comments received after the comment closing date will be filed in the public docket and will be considered to the extent practicable. In addition to late comments, FMCSA will continue to file, in the public docket, relevant information that becomes available after the comment closing date. Interested persons should continue to examine the public docket for new material.

**Larry W. Minor,**  
*Associate Administrator for Policy.*